

Other BLS Services

In addition to its various publications, the Bureau provides a number of services upon request for users of statistical data. These include release of certain categories of unpublished data; development of special surveys and tabulations; duplication of machine-readable data files; and the provision of consultative services on survey techniques and on the production, uses, and limitations of its data. The availability and cost of these services, however, are constrained by the Bureau's—

- Strict policy on protection of the confidentiality of the data it collects;
- Base program priorities; and
- Resource requirements to provide the services.

Each of these constraints is discussed below.

CONFIDENTIALITY SAFEGUARDS

The Bureau adheres to a rigorous confidentiality policy to assure the privacy and cooperation of all its respondents. This policy provides that the Bureau will make available the data it collects only in forms that assure that neither the identity of individual respondents nor the design of the sample will be disclosed. In addition, the Bureau will honor all legal restrictions placed on the disclosure of data furnished by outside agencies or other sources. This policy applies not only to the Bureau's regular data series but also to special surveys that are undertaken on behalf of public or private customers.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Bureau will, as resources permit, undertake special requests to tabulate and distribute data. Some special requests may be handled concurrently with the regular tabulation and publication programs. In any conflict over production facilities, reimbursable customer projects will always be subordinated to the production of the Bureau's basic statistical output.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Customers who request work for their special benefit—as distinguished from the public interest—will be charged the full cost of production.

UNPUBLISHED DATA

The Bureau does not publish all the data it collects for a number of reasons, such as:

Lack of sufficient protective aggregation. If data are not summarized at a high enough level to protect the identity of individual respondents, they will not be published. To do so would violate the Bureau's pledge of confidentiality to respondents.

Lack of validity. If the data collected do not meet the Bureau's strict statistical standards of validity, they will not be published. For example, a high rate of response errors might make a set of data meaningless in some situations. Judgments about validity are made on a case-by-case basis.

Insufficient demand to justify publication costs. The Bureau generates some data as byproducts or intermediate stages of certain programs. Often, public demand for these data is not strong enough to justify the expenditure of public funds to publish them. The Bureau will release summary files, however, to interested parties at cost of duplication, when data meet the confidentiality requirements.

When unpublished data are requested—and if they do not reveal the identity of individual respondents—they may be released even if they do not meet validity standards. The Bureau will provide, so far as possible, descriptions of the data, appropriate statements of limitations, and other technical documentation. Since data files are byproducts of published reports, they may be of marginal statistical reliability when used for other purposes. Moreover, corrections made in the final publication have not always been carried back to the data files. These and other technical difficulties may require careful handling by the user and perhaps some correction of minor discrepancies and in-

consistencies if the files are to be used in intensive analyses or with tabulations that require absolute consistency in the data. BLS will provide copies of the files as they stand; it will not, however, take the responsibility of correcting for individual users deficiencies that may be discovered during further processing of these data.

SPECIAL TABULATIONS

When requested, the Bureau will retabulate certain existing data files to provide cross-classifications that do not appear in its publications. Tabulations prepared from individual records will be reviewed carefully to make certain that no individual information can be inferred from the summary, in accordance with the Bureau's confidentiality policy. Special tabulations or transcriptions of BLS data will be undertaken on a cost-recovery basis.

DATA FILES ON TAPE AND THE INTERNET

Historical time series files for most of the Bureau's regular surveys are available for purchase in a standard tape

format (9-track, 6250 BPI), either singly or at a reduced price, by subscription. Descriptions of the files available are given at the end of the description of each program area earlier in this publication. A price list and ordering information are available from the Bureau's Division of Information Services.

The BLS Web site houses a wide range of data and information related to labor statistics including data from all program offices; information about BLS, its surveys and programs, and its publications and research papers; regional information; Web addresses of other statistical sites; and information on whom to contact for information or data on specific topics. To access BLS through the Internet: **<http://stats.bls.gov>**

CONSULTATIVE SERVICES

In addition to furnishing data, regional and national office staffs are available for consultation on the application, uses, and limitations of BLS data.